

Closing the Strategy-Policy Gap in Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction

Two successive presidents have determined that weapons of mass destruction (WMD) pose the greatest of threats to the American people. Further, the Department of Defense (DoD) has named countering WMD a primary U.S. military mission. Paradoxically, however, DoD has decided that counter-WMD missions will *not* drive the capacity of U.S. forces, which leads to a potentially critical gap. Relatively little investment has been made in the forces and capabilities needed to eliminate WMD arsenals vulnerable to theft as a result of civil war, state failure, or other pathways to loss or transfer of WMD.

A RAND Corporation report addresses the gap between national security strategy and DoD’s resource policy relating to force size (capacity) and structure (capabilities) and shows the magnitude of the force structure required to eliminate WMD, including the types and size of U.S. Army forces.

What Is the Gap Between WMD Proliferation Threats and Resourcing Priorities?

There appears to be a serious gap between the magnitude of the WMD threat and DoD’s resource priorities. Specifically, the Defense Strategic Guidance does not elevate countering WMD to the status of threats that drive military capacity or military capabilities. Also, less than 2 percent of the budget for countering WMD appears to be allocated to eliminating WMD stockpiles.

What Is Needed to Deal with Potential Future WMD-Elimination Operations?

Eliminating WMD—and the industrial-scale capabilities to build and maintain them—is very challenging. As such, a joint task force (JTF) should be assigned the WMD-elimination (WMD-E) mission. This JTF should include specially trained and equipped multifunctional and combat-capable task forces (TFs) responsible for cordoning off and conducting search operations in site facilities and for finding, identifying, and securing or removing WMD, materials, and components. They must also be large and capable enough to provide their own security in the context of a broader joint campaign.

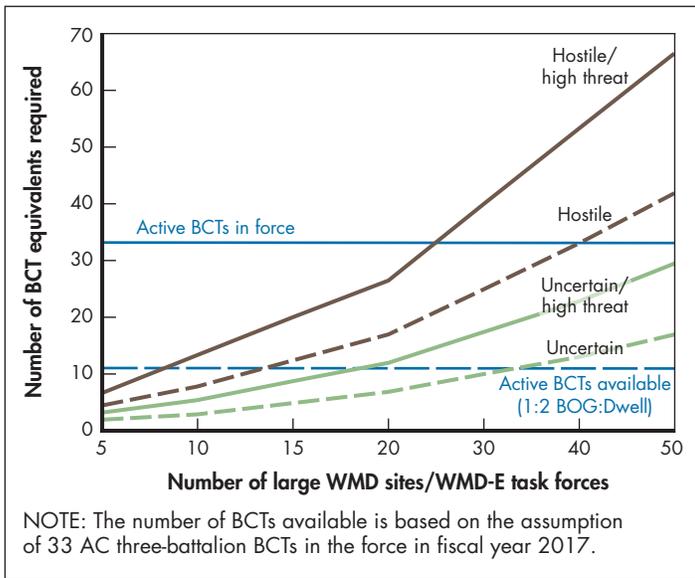
Key points:

- There is a serious gap between the magnitude of the WMD threat and DoD’s resource priorities for counter-WMD missions.
- The size, complexity and strategic importance of WMD elimination operations will require a JTF and involve substantial ground forces.
- The best estimate in a collapsed North Korea scenario is 188,000 U.S. ground troops.
- Policymakers must determine the number and size of WMD sites the United States should be prepared to assault, secure, and neutralize simultaneously.
- DoD should promote countering WMD to the status of missions that drive resourcing priorities.
- The U.S. Army should assess needed requirements for the WMD-E mission.

Ground forces are well suited to performing the WMD-E mission, and Army forces, in particular, are especially capable of leading these kinds of joint operations.

How Many Ground Forces Could WMD-E Operations Require?

Analyses of illustrative scenarios converge on a striking finding: *The potential ground force requirements for WMD-E are substantial; they could consume most or all the Army’s ground maneuver and assault aviation forces.* The figure illustrates this finding. It shows the ground force requirements in terms of the estimated number of brigade combat teams (BCTs) for WMD-E operations against different assumed numbers of WMD sites to be assaulted concurrently in initial operations in four different threat environments. The figure depicts 33 active component (AC) BCTs with 11 operationally available



under a 1:2 boots-on-the-ground (BOG):Dwell rotation policy (one BCT forward, one preparing for deployment, and one in reset from a previous deployment).

Army force structure limits could be reached at 23 large WMD sites if all BCTs were committed in a Hostile/High Threat environment, or just eight large WMD sites if the Army's BCTs were committed at 1:2 BOG:Dwell ratio. At a 1:2 ratio, AC forces can cover 18 sites in an Uncertain/High threat environment or 34 sites in an Uncertain environment.

Our best estimate is that 188,000 U.S. ground troops would be needed for the WMD-E mission in a collapsed North Korea scenario—to seize key sites, secure them, search and clear them of WMD, and establish and protect the logistics routes needed to sustain operations. This estimate could be as low as 73,000 if the risk from North Korea military remnants were low, or as high as 273,000 if the environment worsened to become High-Threat. Importantly, these estimates exclude any additional forces to conduct stability operations, humanitarian assistance, large-scale combat operations against intact state military forces, or other counter-WMD missions.

The findings have two key implications. First, joint force commanders—not just WMD specialists—must understand

WMD-E operations and carefully consider, in contingency and operational planning, their potentially large force requirements. Second, the potential claim of WMD-E operations on available Army force structure is sufficiently high that DoD resource policy decisions involving Army force structure should consider the conventional ground force requirements of WMD-E operations in DoD force-sizing.

Concluding Observations

To close the national strategy–resource policy gap, policy-makers must first determine the number and size of WMD sites the United States should be prepared to assault, secure, and neutralize simultaneously. Then, DoD should:

- Promote countering WMD to the status of missions that drive resourcing priorities.
- Assess the force requirements for missions countering and eliminating WMD across a wide range of scenarios and in both contingency and operational campaign planning.
- Perform a capabilities gap analysis of countering and eliminating WMD.

For its part, the Army should:

- Consider preparing each of its three corps for this mission, with I and III Corps acting as JTF-Elimination in the Pacific Command and Central Command theaters, respectively, and XVIII Airborne Corps available worldwide.
- Develop alternative concepts of operations for conducting WMD-E operations in a joint campaign, assess the number of simultaneous WMD-E TFs that could be supported by existing and planned technical units, and decide on roles, missions, component mixes, and training requirements for countering WMD.
- Simultaneously assess mobility requirements for WMD-E and other counter-WMD operations.

The Army cannot redress gaps in countering WMD alone. But the national strategy–resource policy gaps cannot be closed sufficiently, much less fully, without the Army, whose force capacity and capabilities—properly resourced—are essential to protecting the American people from one of the greatest threats.



This research brief describes work done in the RAND Arroyo Center documented in *Strategy-Policy Mismatch: How the U.S. Army Can Help Close Gaps in Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction*, by Timothy M. Bonds, Eric V. Larson, Derek Eaton, and Richard E. Darilek, RR-541-RC, 2014 (available at www.rand.org/t/RR541). The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. RAND® is a registered trademark. © RAND 2014



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